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STATE BOARD OF HEALTH

A BRIEF STUDY OF 2,000 BIRTH CERTIFICATES

W. A. DAVIS, M. D.
Secretary and State Registrar of Vital Statistics

BUREAU OF VITAL STATISTICS
AUSTIN, TEXAS

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BETHESDA 14, MD.

It is very evident that any conclusion based on a study of only 2,000 birth records could not be taken as a standard.

The object of this paper is to call to the attention of the Texas physicians the vast amount of valuable information contained in a complete birth certificate and to lead such physicians to give the matter of birth registration more consideration, so that the records that they file may be complete.

A REPORT OF A STUDY OF 2,000 BIRTH CERTIFICATES

The following data and tables were compiled from 2,000 birth certificates filed for the month of August, 1917, and inludes the certificates of the five cities in the Registration District for deaths. The five cities in Texas recognized as securing an excess of 90% of the deaths are Beaumont, Dallas, El Paso, Galveston and San Antonio, and it appears that the birth records should be more accurate and complete than in those cities not recognized.

CERTIFICATES INCLUDED.

Of the 2,000 birth certificates, 773 were filed by the five cities mentioned; 1,227 were taken from the smaller cities and rural registration districts. The negro and the illegitimate births were turned back and not included in the compilation. The complete reports of the cities and rural districts, with the above exception, were selected from widely separated parts of the State.

SEX.

The data shows that there were 1,012 male and 966 female births. The boys born were 46 in excess of the girls. Twenty-two certificates did not show the sex of the child.* The physicians failed to state on 202 certificates whether the child was alive or stillborn. 1,736 certificates were for children alive, while 62 were stillborn.

DEFECTIVE RECORDS.

138 certificates were written in pencil; 278 omitted the birth place of the mother; 164 birth place of father; 72 the place of birth; 46 the color of father; 42 color of mother; but because of the marriage laws of the State if either parent was stated as white the birth was considered a white birth.

TABLE 1.

Of the 2,000 birth certificates—

72	did not show Item	1, Place of Birth.
673	did not show Item	2, Name of Child.
*8	did not show Item	3, Sex of Child.
28	did not show Item	7, Residence of Father.
46	did not show Item	8, Color of Father.
164	did not show Item	9, Birth place of Father.

*On the original certificates 22 did not show the sex of the child. This bureau was unable to secure a completion of 8 records. Such discrepancies will appear in the other tables if closely read.

22 did not show Item 10, Occupation of Father.
14 did not show Item 11, No. of Children Born.
16 did not show Item 12, Legitimacy of Child.
18 did not show Item 13, Date of Birth.
64 did not show Item 14, Mothers' Maiden Names.
32 did not show Item 15, Residence of Mother.
42 did not show Item 16, Color of Mother.
278 did not show Item 17, Birth place of Mother.
28 did not show Item 19, Dr.'s Certificate, and
138 were pencil, and 540 items as to ages were omitted.

The full maiden name of the mother was omitted on more than 30% of the certificates, while 64 certificates gave no name of mother. On 11 certificates the name of the mother was entirely omitted. Item 12 on the certificate referring to the legitimacy of the child was left blank on 16 certificates, although the facts show the child to be legitimate. The date of birth was omitted on 18 certificates, and on 28 the physician failed to complete his certification; 34 failed to state whether alive or stillborn.

CHILDREN BORN.

In the 2,000 families covered by the certificates there were 5,222 children living out of 5,864 born in the same families, showing that 642 or 10.9% of the total number born had died, not including stillbirths. There had been 2.9 births with 2.6 living children average per family.

One death among the children had occurred in 338 families; 2 deaths in 66; 3 deaths in 32; and 4 deaths in 42 families. Out of the 2,000 families, 164 records were not sufficiently plain to be compiled.

NUMBER OF BIRTHS PER FAMILY.

The number of children born in the families represented vary from 1 to 15. In 548 families the birth reported was the 1st, in 384 the 2d; in 20 the 10th; in 26 the 11th; in 8 the 12th; and in two families the 15th birth.

TABLE 2.

In the 2,000 families the births reported was

the 1st in 548 families.
the 2d in 384 families.
the 3d in 302 families.
the 4th in 220 families.
the 5th in 154 families.
the 6th in 144 families.
the 7th in 56 families.
the 8th in 54 families.
the 9th in 40 families.
the 10th in 20 families.

the 11th in 26 families.
the 12th in 8 families.
the 15th in 2 families.

NUMBER OF CHILDREN LIVING.

The records show that in 606 families there was 1 living child; in 408, 2 children living. There were 10 living children in 14; 11 in 16 families, and 12 children in 2 families.

TABLE 3.

Of the 2,000 families—

606 had 1 child living.
408 had 2 children living.
316 had 3 children living.
192 had 4 children living.
158 had 5 children living.
128 had 6 children living.
56 had 7 children living.
42 had 8 children living.
22 had 9 children living.
14 had 10 children living.
16 had 11 children living.
2 had 12 children living.
32 were without a living child.

DIFFERENCE IN AGES OF PARENTS.

The time honored standard of unscientific origin, limiting the difference in the ages of man and wife demanding that the former be older than the latter, appears to be disregarded. In many records there exists a considerable difference in the ages of the parents, and in 5.3% the mother was older than the father. The difference was as follows: Forty mothers were one year older than the father; 27 were two years, and 16 three years older; the ages of both parents were omittted in 160 certificates.

TABLE 4.

Of the 2,000 mothers—

40 were 1 year older than the father.
27 were 2 years older than the father.
16 were 3 years older than the father.
12 were 4 years older than the father.
1 was 5 years older than the father.
3 were 6 years older than the father.
17 were 7 years older than the father.
1 was 12 years older than the father.

On only 35 were the ages the same. In 87% of the families the

husband was older than the wife. The difference in age runs from 1 to 36 years.

TABLE 5.

156	fathers were	1 year older than the mother.
221	fathers were	2 years older than the mother.
224	fathers were	3 years older than the mother.
186	fathers were	4 years older than the mother.
183	fathers were	5 years older than the mother.
157	fathers were	6 years older than the mother.
129	fathers were	7 years older than the mother.
91	fathers were	8 years older than the mother.
69	fathers were	9 years older than the mother.
56	fathers were	10 years older than the mother.
46	fathers were	11 years older than the mother.
21	fathers were	12 years older than the mother.
46	fathers were	13 years older than the mother.
28	fathers were	14 years older than the mother.
17	fathers were	15 years older than the mother.
21	fathers were	16 years older than the mother.
6	fathers were	17 years older than the mother.
8	fathers were	18 years older than the mother.
18	fathers were	19 years older than the mother.
6	fathers were	20 years older than the mother.
1	father was	22 years older than the mother.
2	fathers were	30 years older than the mother.
1	father was	38 years older than the mother.

In 48% the father was from 1 to 4 years older than the mother; in 20% from 5 to 9; in 9% from 10 to 20 years older, while five records show the husband 21, 22, 23, 27 and 28 years older than the wife, with two records showing a difference of 30 years, and one showing a difference of 38 years.

AGE OF MOTHERS.

The age of mothers show considerable variation. The State places the age of consent at 16, the age of marriage without pemission of parents at 18; and woman, by many authorities, is not considered matured until after twenty years of age. Yet nine of these mothers were under 16; 62 under 18; and 238 or 11.9%, were under 20. 54% of all births occurred to mothers between 20 and 29; 20% to mothers between 30 and 39 years of age.

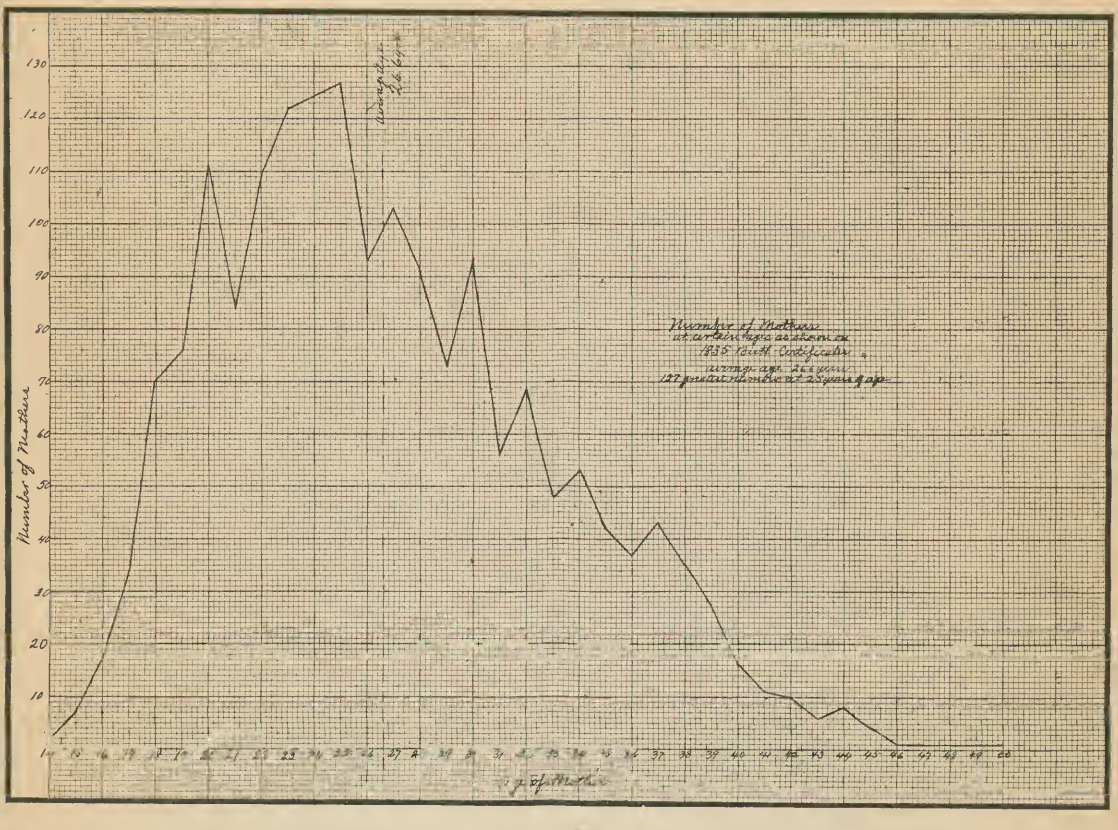
TABLE 6.

Of the 2,000 mothers—

2	were 14 years old.
7	were 15 years old.
18	were 16 years old.
35	were 17 years old.
80	were 18 years old.

86 were 19 years old.
111 were 20 years old.
94 were 21 years old.
109 were 22 years old.
122 were 23 years old.
124 were 24 years old.
127 were 25 years old.
93 were 26 years old.
103 were 27 years old.
91 were 28 years old.
73 were 29 years old.
93 were 30 years old.
56 were 31 years old.
68 were 32 years old.
48 were 33 years old.
53 were 34 years old.
42 were 35 years old.
37 were 36 years old.
43 were 37 years old.
35 were 38 years old.
27 were 39 years old.
16 were 40 years old.
11 were 41 years old.
10 were 42 years old.
6 were 43 years old.
8 were 44 years old.
4 were 45 years old.
1 was 48 years old.
1 was 49 years old.
1 was 50 years old.

The following scale will show the comparative age of the mothers as given on the 2,000 birth certificates, so far as certificates were complete as to this data. The age of the mother will be found at the lower margin, while the number of mothers at this age will be found at the left margin:



Fifty-eight children were born to mothers between 40 and 45. One certificate gave the mother as 48, one 49 and one 50 years; while the youngest mother was 14. The greatest number of births were for mothers 21 and 27 years of age. The average age of all mothers was 26½ years.

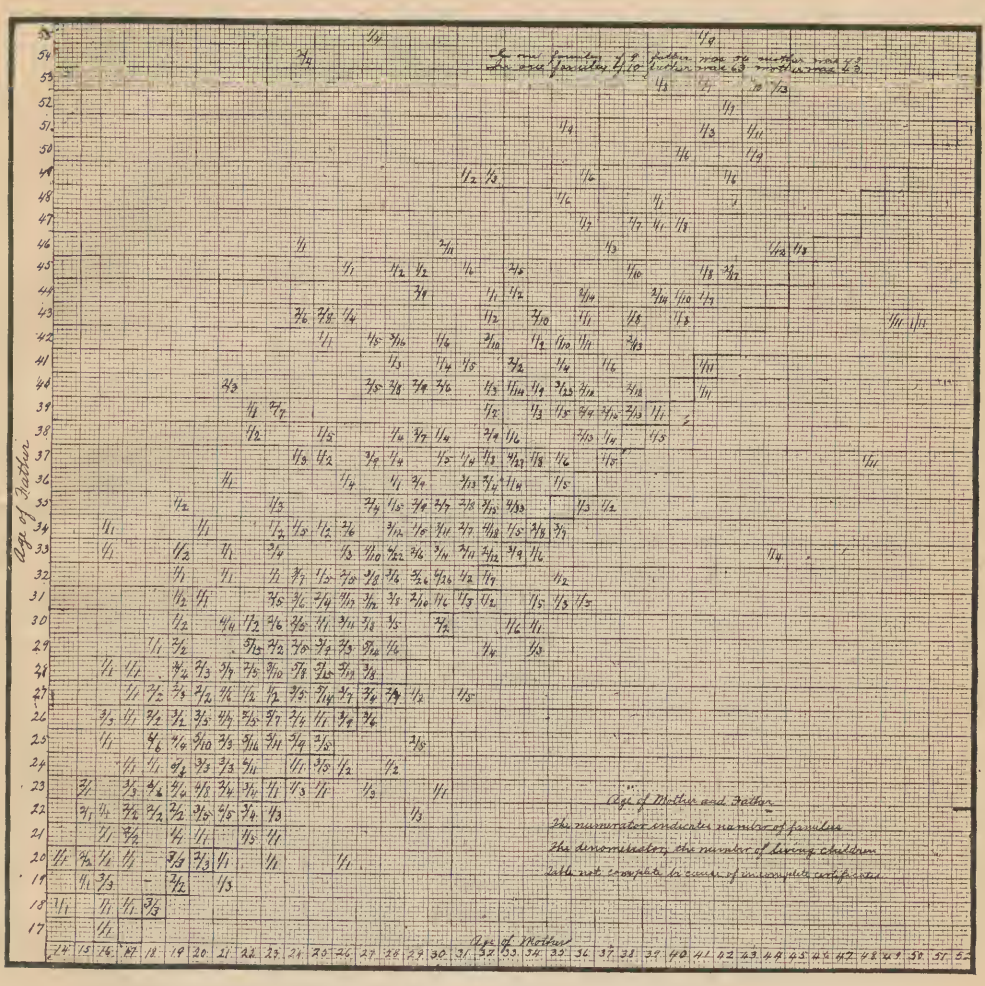
TABLE 7.

228 children were born to mothers under 20 years of age.
560 children were born to mothers from 20 to 24 years of age.
487 children were born to mothers from 25 to 29 years of age.
318 children were born to mothers from 30 to 34 years of age.
184 children were born to mothers from 35 to 39 years of age.
51 children were born to mothers from 40 to 44 years of age.
7 children were born to mothers over 45 years of age

On the following chart is shown the age of the father in the left margin, and on the lower margin the age of the mother. The fraction appearing in the square indicates the number of families and the number of children living.

The numerator indicates the number of families with the mother and

father of the age indicated in the margin. The denominator the number of children in such families. The heavy lines through the cut inclose those families where the mother and father are of the same age.



BIRTHPLACE OF PARENTS.

The largest average number of children were found in families where both parents were born in a State other than Texas. The average number in such families was 4.3 children to the family. Where both parents were Texas born the average was 2.4 children, while in families where both parents were foreign born the average was 1.6 children per family. The smallest families show that one parent was foreign born. The parents in 57.6% of the families were native Texans. In 27.3% one parent was a Texan; in 10.4% both parents were born in one of the

older States; in 7.2% both parents were foreign born, while in 6% one parent was foreign born, as shown in the following table:

TABLE 8.

	% of the 2,000	No. of Families.	% of Total Children.	No. of Children.	Average No. of Children per Family.
Where both parents are Texans by birth	57.6%	1152	47.2%	2848	2.4 children
One parent is Texan by birth.	27.3%	546	26%	1572	2.8 children
Both parents born in another State	10.4%	204	14.7%	892	4.3 children
One parent foreign born	6%	120	.5%	192	1.6 children
Both parents foreign born	7.2%	184	8.7%	520	2.9 children

No data covering 268 families.

Of the foreign-born parents, 50.6% were from Mexico; 12.6% from Germany; 9.5% from Italy; 7.4% from Austria; 4.9% from Russia; 3.3% from Greece; 2.4% from England and Sweden; a fraction over 1% from Spain and Montenegro, and less than 1% from Scotland, Norway, Turkey, and Holland.

Of the parents born in other States: 1.7% come from Tennessee; 1.3% from Alabama; .7% from Mississippi, Louisiana, and Georgia; .6% from Missouri; .4% from Kentucky; .3% from Illinois and Oklahoma; .2% from Virginia and Kansas; a fraction over .1% from Pennsylvania, Indiana, South Carolina, and New York, with less than .1% from Ohio, Minnesota and Nebraska.

OCCUPATION OF PARENTS.

An increased birth rate is always indicative of prosperity. The proportionate number of each occupation must be considered and the conclusion must not be drawn that veterinary surgeons, musicians, and editors are not as prosperous as farmers. 49% of the births occurred in the homes of farmers; and 18% in the homes of skilled laborers. Only 22 of the 2,000 births showed the fathers to be county or city officials; 18 teachers; 12 preachers; 4 births were reported in the families of physicians and lawyers; and only 1 in the homes of veterinary surgeons, musicians and editors.

TABLE 9.

The 2,000 records show that among the fathers there were 988 farmers, 367 skilled laborers, 196 common laborers, 64 mechanics and 64 merchants, 55 in clerical positions, 38 salesmen, 22 stockmen, and 22 county and city officials, 18 teachers, 16 barbers, 14 in the army service, 12 preachers, and 12 real estate dealers, 4 doctors and 4 lawyers, 1 editor, 1 veterinary surgeon and 1 musician.

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